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SUBJECT: TALABANI ON THE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP, DE-BAATH,
BARZANI AND THE PKK

Classified By: Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[¶1.](#) (C) SUMMARY: Iraqi President Talabani told Ambassadors Crocker and Satterfield on November 7 that Maliki wanted to delay the strategic partnership and was negatively affecting the possibility of reconciliation by his dismissal of the Tawafuq ministers. The PM was willing to submit the leaders' draft of the de-Baathification law to the CoR, according to Talabani, but if he did not the Presidency Council would submit it. Talabani urged the Ambassadors to speak frankly to Masood Barzani on the PKK when they visited him the next day. He and Deputy Prime Minister Barham Saleh also discussed the status of the GOI 2008 budget, the fate of Sultan Hashim, and Talabani's upcoming regional trip. END SUMMARY.

On the Strategic Partnership

[¶2.](#) (C) Talabani told the Ambassador that the PM did not believe in the strategic partnership with the U.S. and felt that this was not the right time to make such an agreement. According to Saleh, the PM wanted to announce only the principles of the partnership, which the Ambassador thought was acceptable. Talabani said ISCI leaders Ammar and Abdelaziz Hakim had expressed their support for the strategic partnership agreement. The Ambassador then urged the 31 to bless the partnership, but Talabani thought convening the 31 together at this time would be a mistake as dialogue between Maliki and Hashimi would just devolve into squabbling.

Maliki Accepts Resignations of the Tawafuq Ministers

[¶3.](#) (C) Talabani said that Prime Minister Maliki had finally accepted the resignations of the Tawafuq ministers, but he did so in such a way that it was equivalent to firing them for cause (prolonged absence from work). This meant that they would not receive any of the benefits, including pensions, to which former ministers were entitled. Barham Saleh thought this was illegal - only the CoR can remove a minister, he said - and that there would likely be a legal challenge. Talabani said he had called the PM and angrily demanded an explanation, but did not get far. He complained that some of the ministers, such as the Minister of Higher Education, had actually wanted to return to the government. Visibly frustrated with the PM, he told the Ambassador that the PM had published an order to dismiss all Tawafuq members from the neighborhood security committees without warning. He related how some had arrived for the meetings only to be turned away.

[¶4.](#) (C) According to Saleh, the PM had insisted that they already have national reconciliation in Iraq, to which Talabani quipped that this was because the PM does not want to do anything about it. Talabani blamed the U.S. for not adequately communicating to Maliki that U.S. support for Maliki is limited. The Ambassador pushed back, saying that

if Talabani was dissatisfied with the government he and the other leaders should do something. Talabani again tried to put the onus on the U.S. to force Maliki's cooperation. He also noted that Adel Mahdi had written an excellent study of the constitution and the respective powers on Presidency and Prime Minister at Hashimi's request.

Legislation

15. (C) Talabani claimed that Mashhadani was ready to present the de-Baathification law to the CoR. The PM claimed he was ready to withdraw the current draft from the CoR and the Council of Ministers would vote on November 13 to present the leaders draft to the CoR, according to Talabani. Talabani said he had made clear to the PM that the Presidency Council would send the leaders' draft to the CoR if the CoM failed to vote. He thought Hashimi would have to support the leaders' draft because he had previously approved it, but he warned that not all members of Tawafuq would agree. He told the Ambassador that Hashimi also agreed on the provincial powers law, but Tawafuq was divided and the Maliki was also against it. He indicated that KRG President Barzani was the only one standing in the way of passage of hydrocarbons legislation. He also promised to convince the CoR not to take its entire two months recess in January and February.

Dealing With Barzani and the PKK

16. (C) Talabani emphasized the importance of speaking to Barzani in specifics when the Ambassador traveled to Salahaddin to meet Barzani the next day. The Ambassador emphasized the serious mood in Ankara and the need to take

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concrete specific action. Talabani took on board this assessment, and relayed that he had explained to the PKK if they continued fighting they would face all the Kurdish nations. Talabani said even Barzani was ready to permit the Turks to travel to Kurdistan to see the measures being taken against the PKK. He said Nechirvan understands that the GOI needs to lead the actions against the PKK and that the responsibility for working with Turkey lies with the Iraqi Foreign Ministry, but that KRG Presidency Chief of Staff Fuad Hussein did not. Talabani thought that, upon his return, KRG President Masood Barzani should come to Baghdad to help work out the remaining issues with legislation. He said KRG PM Nechirvan Barzani "is with me completely." He expressed his full support for Nechirvan and his handling of the PKK issue, and confided that Nechirvan had asked Talabani to intercede with Masood on this issue.

GOI 2008 Budget

17. (C) Saleh told the Ambassador that the CoM had agreed on \$9 billion for security in the 2008 GOI budget. He said the "Kurdish issue" had been fixed as well. Total investment would be \$12-13 billion, including a \$3 billion carryover from 2007. The total budget will be \$48 billion. He said SOMO told him that Iraqi crude was trading that day for \$88 per barrel.

Anfal Sentences

18. (C) Talabani claimed that he and Mahdi had told the PM they were against executing Sultan Hashim. According to Talabani, the PM had agreed on a personal level but would not agree in his official capacity as PM. He complained that the PM was telling them one thing and doing another. The Ambassador stressed that the Presidency and PM needed to work together to find an acceptable outcome. Talabani declared that the constitution prevents the Presidency from pardoning them, but they can postpone the date of their execution.

Talabani Regional Trip

¶9. (C) Talabani confirmed to the Ambassador that that he would leave November 10 for Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait, with goals of debt forgiveness and reconciliation. The Ambassador recognized the importance of the Arab states but repeatedly expressed his opposition to Talabani's leaving the country, as well as the reported trips of Maliki (China, Qatar, Emirates) and the Vice Presidents. Finance Minister Jabr and CoR member Hummam Hammudi (ISCI) may accompany Talabani to Kuwait, Talabani said.

¶10. (C) Comment: Talabani made several references to leaving the Arabs to work out their own problems and returning to Kurdistan. He also said he would return to Baghdad on November 20th, after which he would help solve all of Iraq's problems or he would resign. While he made these comments jokingly, his obvious frustration with Maliki's actions and the government stalemate was fully on display at this meeting.

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